



Angelica Berrie:
A
Lover
Of Humanity

Angelica Berrie has become one of the most selfless philanthropists to date, being involved in so much more than most of us could ever complete in multiple lifetimes. *MillionaireAsia's* **Karly Holash** learns about the lady who is not only an inspiration to her Filipino heritage, but a role model for us all.

The name Angelica Berrie may not strike any chords, but what she has done in multiple countries would set her apart from most people. She has broken away from the stereotype of a typical Filipino woman to become a CEO, Chairman and Founder of three different organisations. Aside from her great success in the business world, Berrie has nobly given generous donations and hundreds of hours to various charities across the globe.

Diving Into The Business Of Philanthropy

Berrie, formally known as Angelica Urrea, started out in a papier-mâché product company in the Philippines and it was there that she met a client who eventually became her husband Russell Berrie. He became the inspiration for many of her philanthropic projects, starting with his long-term struggle with diabetes and his beliefs in the Jewish religion.

Both adopting the idea that giving is what they were called to do, Berrie quickly became submersed in the Russell Berrie Foundation, which later became the largest private foundation in North Jersey and aided several different aspects within society. Through this organisation, the couple offered great amounts of money to The Naomi Berrie Diabetes Center at Columbia University in order to invest in research for diabetes as well as stem cell research in hopes of finding a cure.

Berrie also adopted Russell's Jewish lifestyle and assisted him in promoting the Jewish religion, or in her words, "building bridges between faiths." Through her philanthropic efforts, she found that there are many struggles between various religions. "Tensions between religions are the most challenging issue of our times."

This drove her to become involved in the Pope John Paul II Center in Inter-Religious Studies at the Angelicum, a Pontifical University in Rome where The Russell Berrie Foundation established a program that exposes Catholic priests to interfaith studies and brings them to Israel to be exposed to different religious traditions to learn about coexistence.

Nanotechnology is also a personal cause of hers. Together with her husband, they established the Russell Berrie Nanotechnology Institute at the Technion University in Haifa, Israel. Nanotechnology is said to have the potential to create new sorts of medicines, aiding in the search for a cure in many diseases, such as diabetes and cancer. This institute produced the "nano-Bible, which is the entire Bible reduced to the size of a grain of sugar, which was presented to Pope Benedict on his recent visit to the Holy Land by President Shimon Peres.

Moving On To Bigger Things

After the death of her husband in 2002, Berrie became the president of the Russell Berrie Foundation and also took over his global gift company, Russ Berrie and Co. She shared, "The experience of loss changed the way I live my life. I became conscious of making everyday count, to live an inspired life and not just do things

automatically. Losing my husband made me realise that you have to live in the moment and not put off what you've always wanted to do."

Soon after, she created a "life list" which is a compiled list of all the tasks she wants to complete in her lifetime; she has already crossed off sky-diving.

Berrie became very passionate about cancer research and began to devote much of her time to becoming Chairman of the Gilda's Club Worldwide, a cancer support organisation in 26 cities in North America. There she has been able to speak with hundreds of cancer patients, motivating people to support the cause of social and emotional support for families living with any form of cancer. This is where she has met some of the people she remembers the most.

In describing philanthropy, Berrie said, "It has been a source of deep personal fulfilment for me. It has allowed me to meet people who are change agents, inspired me in my own personal journey and challenged me to find creative solutions for issues I care passionately about."

Back To Her Roots

Her latest commitment has been geared towards her home country –

the Philippines. The Global Nomad was recently established to allow travellers to experience parts of the Philippines that have never been exposed. "I realised how little people knew about the Philippines. There is so much natural beauty in my country, yet so few travellers have access to insider information to enable them to explore places off the beaten path."

The organisation will be a new experience for travellers and profits earned will go towards the preservation of the unique cultural traditions the Philippines has to offer. Berrie said what she hopes to do next is to "create a cultural fund to spark innovation among young Filipino artists who are so talented."

She wants to give hope to the young talents in her country as well as give them the means to achieve their dreams. Berrie devotes her heart, mind and soul to every cause she has developed a passion for.

When asked about her views on wealth, she said, "Wealth is a powerful instrument for transformation. If you use it to transform peoples' lives, transform your community and transform the world you live in, you can be a force for good. It is a means through which we express our spiritual values and experience our own personal transformation as we encounter humanity."

Through her hope and imagination, she is slowly creating a better future in more ways than one. ■

From top left, clockwise: Beach at Batanes; Leaf Day Bed at Bella Roca; Siargao – Mindanao; Kayaking at El Nido; Vacation house at Batanes

